

stances of the country itself at this moment may make it worth while for thoughtful men, such as I see before me, to consider whether there may not be in that principle some escape from the evils that we are likely to experience here. I am quite prepared to say that as regards everything it would be an unmixed good. It would certainly tend to consolidate the empire, to bring the inherent elements of strength more directly under the control of the principal Government, and increase her influence and strength. The general principle would be simply the consolidation of the general interests which concern us all, whether we are East or West, or North or South—the consolidation of these under one general Legislature, and the localising of the sectional questions which are not imperial to England, to Scotland, to Ireland, or to Canada or Australia. There are certain local questions which they can deal with better than anybody else can; and I believe that it would be very much better if they were dealt with by all whose interests are really embarked in them. I would not venture to attempt to suggest even the details by which such a policy could be adopted. My object this afternoon has been rather to bring the subject before you, and to suggest it as one which I think might well be worth consideration and discussion. I do not think it would be time lost, by any means, if the statesmen of this country would see whether there may not be in the Irish claim for self-government a principle involved that would tend to the great advantage of the empire at large. I do not believe that the statesmen of this country are unequal to the difficulties of such a task. On the contrary, I believe that the difficulties which they now are encountering are greater than any that would follow the attempt to solve the problem. The difficulty of constantly applying an anodyne to an acute disease is worse than that of dealing directly with the disease itself. I venture to think that if the consideration of such subjects as I have occupied your attention with this afternoon were referred to leading men in this country, and to leading colonists, it would not be very difficult to elaborate a plan that would commend itself to the judgment of the thoughtful people of this country. I